

May 28, 2002

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Anthony T. Hernandez  
Director

Lakshmanan Sathyavagiswaran, M.D.  
Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner

SUBJECT: REPORT ON VERMIN ACTIVITY/BOARD MOTION  
DATED APRIL 30, 2002

At the April 30, 2002, Board meeting, Agenda Item Number 4, your Board instructed the Department of Coroner to prepare guidelines on how long bodies are retained, how often body storage bags are drained, how often bodies are cleaned, and the proper disposal of body fluids. This also included a plan to ensure that bodies are sent for county disposition within a one-year time frame.

### **BODY RETENTION**

Decedents, which remain in custody of the Coroner for more than 30 days, are considered long-term cases. These cases remain in coroner custody for one or both of the following reasons:

- Determination of identification
- Establishment of next of kin

It is the policy of the Coroner not to keep a decedent in its custody any longer than necessary, but in any event, no longer than one year unless legally required. These few exceptions may fall into the categories of extended DNA testing, skeletonized cases, or cases requiring extended anthropology/archaeology searches for additional remains.

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All bodies will be physically evaluated and accounted for on a weekly basis. During this evaluation, the following determinations will be made on each of these cases:

- Accounting as to status of a case and whether it should remain in Coroner custody.
- Condition of the body, and whether there are accumulated fluids that require draining and re-wrapping of the body.

The department presently disposes of bodily fluids into the common drainage system. While this may not meet existing codes for new construction, we currently operate under the codes in place at the time this building was constructed. The new Coroner annex will meet the current code requirements.

#### **USE OF EXISTING CORONER FUNDS**

Per your instructions, the CAO has authorized the use of the Coroner's fund balance for year 2001-02, for the purchase of a new crypt door and an upgrading of the surveillance camera system. The LAC+USC Morgue is currently working with the department to expedite identified long-term cases for cremation.

#### **UNMET NEEDS**

On May 24, 2002 the department submitted to your office a list of unmet needs related to this issue. They include monies to support contracts for county cremations, embalming, and positions in support of the expediting of long-term cases.

ATH:LS:eb

c: David Janssen, CAO  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer of the Board  
Director, Health Services